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THE SCHOOL REVIEW

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THE OUTLOOK FOR THE CURRICULUM.

The action of the National Council of Education looking to the determination of an ideal curriculum for the secondary schools is an event of capital importance. The general committee to which the matter was referred appointed sub-committees on the various subjects of study ; and during the Christmas holidays these sub-committees met at points as far west as Madison and as far east as Cambridge. The subjects of the conferences were (1) Latin, (2) Greek, (3) English, (4) other Modern Languages, (5) Mathematics, (6) Physics, Astronomy, and Chemistry, (7) Natural History, (8) History, Civil Government, and Political Economy, (9) Geography (physical geography, geology, and meteorology). And the sub-committee on each subject was directed or advised to consider when the pupil should begin that subject, how much time he should devote to it, what parts or topics he might master in the time, how the pupil should be taught and examined in the subject, and whether any difference should be made in the case of pupils who are and who are not going to college. When the reports of the sub-committees have been digested by the general committee, and their report presented to the public through the body which commissioned them, we shall have a document which, though certain to provoke a great deal of discussion, can scarcely fail to mark a decisive movement in the organization of our secondary instruction.

In the meantime it is a hopeful sign, not only for the issue of this matter, but for all our educational interests, that educators from the colleges and universities and educators from the schools have joined efforts in the solution of the pressing problem of the

curriculum of the secondary schools. Two extremes are to be avoided ; and there are few educational gatherings in which one or the other, and not infrequently both, find expression. One is that the teachers of the schools must be allowed to fix their own curriculum. Now if this means that persons of larger scholarship and wider training than the principals and teachers should have no voice in the establishment of a standard curriculum for the schools, it must be denounced as narrow and purblind arrogance and party spirit. The other claim is that it is the business of the secondary schools to prepare boys for college. No doubt there are " fitting " academies whose chief function may be thus described ; but as over ninety per cent. of pupils in the public high schools never go farther, those schools at any rate have an end and serve a purpose of their own. Whether this end is incompatible with preparation for college depends upon the harmony that may exist between the ideal curriculum of the secondary school and the ideal test for admission to college.

One fact, however, cannot be too strongly emphasized. In determining the ideal curriculum for the secondary schools we must have our eye, not upon the conventional college entrance requirement, but, on the one hand, upon the entire circle of modern culture (under which term I include both scholarship and science), and, on the other hand, upon the capacities and needs of pupils under eighteen years of age. We should not, therefore, prescribe ethics, psychology, or metaphysics ; for, as these subjects all necessitate introspection, if they are not wholly lost upon a boy, whose faculties are turned towards the objective world, they are at any rate much less profitable to him than the descriptive or even the explanatory sciences of nature. These sciences, on the other hand, or certain of them, should assuredly form a part of the curriculum, for the civilization which our generation is to transmit through education to the next, rests largely on the basis of physical and natural science. Of course the beginning will be made with the observational sciences—geography, geology, or natural history. But even in the schools there should be an advance to physics, which is the fundamental science of the material world. And so much mathematics as is required for the study of physics should also be prescribed,—but no more, as is sometimes done under the inane plea that the abstract reasoning of geometry and algebra is an indispensable mental discipline !

But our culture is humanistic as well as naturalistic. Accord-

ingly we must initiate our children into language, history, and literature. It is by these humanities we humanize them. Five hours a week for four years is not too much time for the study of our own language, literature, and history, with daily practice in the art of writing. What other language shall be studied may be an open question. But it can be psychologically demonstrated that some other language is necessary. For knowledge as a process involves discrimination and comparison. And, therefore, the readiest means of mastering our own tongue is to study it along with another. And whether we consider its inflectional and syntactical contrasts, the affinities of its vocabulary, its historical relationship to the languages of modern Europe, or the large place it fills in the annals of civilization, we shall scarcely hesitate in selecting Latin as the linguistic complement of which we are in quest. As much Latin as can be learned in the secondary schools can be vindicated as a requirement even for pupils whose parents might consider a modern language more "useful" or "practical." Still, in schools which can furnish both Latin and French or German, both should be offered and at least one exacted. As to Greek, I suppose it will follow Hebrew to the university. The elements which it has contributed directly to our modern American culture are so inconsiderable that, much as those persons who would model our schools after the institutions of Germany may deplore it, there is no justification either in reason or experience for adding a second ancient language to the curriculum of the public high schools.

What is above all things needed, however, is that care should be taken to prevent the submerging of humanism by the advancing tide of science. The danger is not imaginary. On the contrary, the evil I deprecate has recently been faced with acquiescence, if not, indeed, with approval, by the present incumbent of what is perhaps the highest educational office in the world. In entering upon the rectorship of the University of Berlin, the illustrious scientist and statesman, Professor Virchow, delivered an address upon Study and Investigation (*Lernen und Forschen*), in the course of which he observes :

"If the classical languages are no longer in condition to establish a bond of union which shall hold together all the different directions of our highest culture, we can find a substitute in that golden triad of mathematics, philosophy, and natural science,

which in their development have furnished the foundation of our entire occidental civilization."

It is because the ancient languages, as they are generally taught, do not appeal to the instinct which in natural science impels us to seek causes, and do not therefore so readily excite to independent investigation, that Professor Virchow would be willing to see them make way for mathematics, physical science, and philosophy. So far as the last is concerned, it should not be taught to school boys. The constituents of the proposed education would, therefore, be mathematics and physical science.

Such a conclusion shows how slight, even in Germany, is the influence of the ancient classics in the way of humanizing, feeding, liberalizing, and elevating the life of the soul. Even in the house of its friends the study is condemned for not achieving what it should never have been expected to achieve. The causal instinct must be exercised and nourished. But besides knowing the causes of things man needs to have his emotions purified, his imagination fed, his affections stirred, his heart warmed by ideas and ideals. Man's education is more and other than facility in discovering the causes of phenomena. Ever since the Attic Greeks introduced the conception, it has been recognized that the object of the schools is to educate youth, not for this or that function, but for manhood simply. And as the Greeks, in pursuit of this end, gave instruction in little else than their own national traditions and poetry, with results whose brilliancy still dazzles us, so later ages have recognized that humane culture is the product of the humanizing influences of literature, history, art, and philosophy. These are the humanities; and so much of them as can be assimilated by youth under eighteen years of age must at all events be retained in the schools. For the humanities are the incarnated essence of the human spirit, as it has been able to embody itself in the course of history; and it is by feeding on this precious legacy that the spiritual capacities of the young are realized. Dethrone humanism in the schools; and you break with the animating principle of civilization—the conviction that spirit is higher than nature, that the proper study of mankind is man and man's spiritual creations.

Because one instrument of humanistic culture is growing obsolete, we need not abandon all humanistic culture. The remedy

is not far to seek. Let us put an end to this miserable masquerading in the habiliments of the ancient world, and see that our youth are clothed upon with the native fabrics of our own civilization. Those are most truly animated by the Greek spirit who, tabooing the study of Greek in the public schools, plead for a more protracted, more thorough, and more intelligent study of the masterpieces of our own literature, along with such constant practice in speaking and composition as will enable pupils to express themselves with facility and correctness in the oral and written use of our own language.

These are fundamental considerations in the re-organization of the instruction of the secondary schools. If the scheme ultimately proposed rests upon sound educational principles it is certain in the end to be universally accepted. If it does not, if it parleys with the arbitrary demands of the colleges, it is doomed to failure. Get an ideal curriculum for the secondary schools, and the colleges will be forced by the circumstances, as they should be willing on grounds of reason, to accept it. Hitherto it has been sought to adjust the school to the college. The problem now before us is to determine the best programme of studies for the schools. That done, we may be sure the discovery will soon be made that the best leaving requirements for the schools are the best entering requirements for the colleges.

This prediction has already been fulfilled in Scotland. The Commissioners appointed under the Universities (Scotland) Act of 1889, have adopted an Ordinance dealing, among other things, with the matriculation requirements, which goes into effect this year. The manner in which the Commission does its work may be described, to show that in the changes they make every side of the question is carefully considered. First a draft ordinance is issued, two months or so being allowed for all parties interested to lodge amendments. After consideration of these a final ordinance is issued, dealing with the particular subject, which lies on the table of the Houses of Parliament for three months. At the end of that time, if unchallenged, it passes into law. It may be assumed, therefore, that every Ordinance expresses the mature wisdom of the best educational opinion of the country.

What then are the new entrance requirements which this Commission has laid down for the Scotch Universities? They are described in the following extract from Ordinance No. 11 :—

“ Before entering on the Curriculum each student shall pass a Preliminary Examination in the following subjects :—

1. English.
2. Latin or Greek.
3. Mathematics.
4. One of the following :—Latin or Greek (if not already taken), French, German, Italian, Dynamics.

The examination must be passed in the matters and on the standards hereinafter defined ; but there shall be a higher and a lower standard in Latin, Greek, and Mathematics. Candidates must pass on the higher standard in at least one of the first three subjects, and may pass on the lower standard in either or both of the remaining two.”

Then follows a description of the requirements in each subject, which correspond tolerably with our own best college entrance tests, except that the quantity of mathematics is somewhat less than with us. But what it especially concerns us to note is that the standards—higher and lower—are correlated with the Higher Grade and Lower Grade Leaving Certificate of the Scotch Education Department, and provision is then made for accepting these certificates in the following noteworthy sections :—

“ The Joint Board of Examiners to be appointed under the provisions of Ordinance No. 8 (Regulations as to Examinations), shall have power to accept the Higher Grade Leaving Certificate of the Scotch Education Department in any subject as an equivalent for Preliminary Examination in that subject ; and to accept the Lower Grade Leaving Certificate of the said Department as an equivalent for the Preliminary Examination in the lower standard in Latin, Greek, and Mathematics, provided they are satisfied that the standard of the examination, at which the said certificates were granted, is not lower than that required by this Ordinance.

The Joint Board of Examiners shall have power to determine what examinations, if any, other than those for the Leaving Certificate of the Scotch Education Department may be accepted as equivalent to the Preliminary Examination in whole or in part, provided they are satisfied that such other examinations are in fact equivalent thereto.”

This entire scheme may be commended to the consideration of all who are interested in the re-organization of instruction in our

secondary schools. If Greek be no longer required, if higher and lower standards be permitted in Latin and Mathematics, if English be put first of all, then the difficulty of finding a proper place for Science and French or German will be reduced to a minimum, if it does not altogether disappear; and a psychologically sound and practically workable programme will have been secured.

EDITOR.

COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS IN GREEK.

The recent movement of the National Council of Education toward the establishment of a standard curriculum for the secondary schools is not unlikely to prove of considerable importance,—it may prove of the highest importance for our whole system of higher education. It is certainly an attempt worth making. If it is to be made at all, certainly this is the time. The settlement which the next few decades make of the relation between the college and the university is likely to be, in its chief outlines, final. The problem about which all questions centre concerns the position of the college in the scheme. Are we to reach the German solution with its dualism of gymnasium and university? Is the old college course to be divided out between the secondary school and the university? Or shall we settle upon the threefold division: the secondary course, the college course, the university course? The settlement of the question will depend essentially upon the location of the frontier between the secondary school and the college. It is largely a question of the students' age. At present in the East this frontier is near the average age nineteen. As this frontier has advanced into the old-time territory of the college course, the university course has correspondingly intruded itself at the other side. Annihilation by partition threatens the college. The larger institutions, equipped for university courses, may regard this with unconcern. The interests of education in the large will not, however, tolerate a disregard of the existing fact that there are in this country at least two hundred and fifty institutions equipped and endowed for the maintenance of the college course proper. A solution of our problem that is to claim general respect and liberate us from our present confusion must evidently take full cognizance of the vested interests